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## SERVICE QUALITY AND VALUE PERCEPTIONS OF THE 2014 FIFA WORLD CUP IN BRAZIL

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This study examines the relationships between service quality and value perceptions of the 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil, controlling for the consumers' opinion about hosting the event in the country. Data were collected from five cities ( $n = 3,042$ ), and the results from a structural model indicate that teams, accessibilities, and event atmosphere have a positive influence on hedonic value and utilitarian value, while referees only have a positive impact on hedonic value. In turn, crowd experience has a negative effect on both hedonic and utilitarian value. Additionally, consumers' favorable opinion about hosting the event showed a positive effect on both hedonic and utilitarian value. These findings suggest the need for an appealing ambiance and crowd vigilance to enhance the event's value. In addition, the more people agree with hosting the event in Brazil the greater the value perception, highlighting the importance of explaining the event benefits to the host community.

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**Key words:** Service quality; Value; Major sport events; Soccer; FIFA World Cup

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### Introduction

Mega-sport events such as the FIFA World Cup are among the most salient events worldwide, generating mass popular appeal and media exposure. D. Liu and Wilson (2014) indicate that the competition to host mega-sport events is fierce and has shown no signs of diminishing, and winning the

bid to host an event such as the FIFA World Cup is seen as an achievement by hosting cities. Bidding for and hosting a mega-sport event requires hosts to incur in a wide range of costs such as bid-applicant fees, marketing expenses, urban rejuvenation, renovating sport facilities, and building new ones (Sant & Mason, 2015). For example, Brazil invested about \$11.6 billion to host the 2014 FIFA World

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Cup (Forbes, 2014), while Russia intends to invest approximately \$20.8 billion in an infrastructure program that includes building and/or improving stadiums, training sites, hotels, airports, transportation, and communication infrastructure necessary to host the 2018 FIFA World Cup (FIFA, 2013).

Despite the financial costs for the hosting community, governments often make strong claims about the positive impacts derived from mega-sport events (Heere et al., 2013). These events are thought to generate different types of impact in the host community that can be largely classified into economic and social impacts (Chalip, 2006). Although the levels of economic impact are continually debated as these figures are considered vital when evaluating an event's performance (e.g., Porter & Fletcher, 2008; Preuss, 2006), a number of studies are now starting to focus on social impacts (e.g., Heere et al., 2013; Inoue & Havard, 2014). Understanding the social impact of a mega-sport event is pivotal as it can represent a source of potential event value (Chalip, 2006). However, there is not a consensus around the value of hosting a major sport event among its consumers and the hosting population in general (Conchas, 2014). Potential negative consequences of mega-sport events have been recently highlighted by both researchers (e.g., D. Liu & Wilson, 2014) and the media. In fact, the recent 2014 FIFA World Cup hosted in Brazil has raised the question of how and if the target consumers and the host population perceive the actual value of such an event ("Brazilian anti-World Cup protests," 2014). Brazil invested greatly into providing ample infrastructure and resources to properly stage this event; however, hosting the event was in itself a source of conflict, with several protests focusing on the cost of the stadiums and whether there was added value to the country ("World Cup 2014," 2014). A report from Data Folha (2014) further mentioned that 58% of Brazilians agreed with hosting the event, while 42% were against hosting just a few months before its official start.

In order to increase the value of an event, it is crucial to understand what factors contribute to increased perceptions of the event's value. Previous studies suggest that a high standard of service quality at the events is a critical issue for hosts (e.g., Ko, Zhang, Cattani, & Pastore, 2011) due to its impact on value creation for consumers and hosts (Kim,

Kang, & Kim, 2014; Yoshida, James, & Cronin, 2013). That is, a consumer's positive opinion about the service quality delivered by the host tends to increase his/her perception of the value of the event (Cronin, Brady, & Hult, 2000) in terms of its social impact. As noted by Vargo and Lusch (2012), the value creation process does not end with the consumption of the service by the consumer, which suggests that value is only obtained within a context (Chandler & Vargo, 2011). A major sport event such as a FIFA World Cup often represents a once in a lifetime experience, and thus examining consumers' perceptions of the service experience and its subsequent value may provide useful insights for improvements in future organizations of mega-sport events. Thus, the purpose of this study was to examine the relationships between service quality and value perceptions of the 2014 FIFA World Cup hosted in Brazil, and to explore the extent to which consumers' differential opinions about Brazil hosting this event contribute to understanding value perceptions of the event to the country.

### *The FIFA World Cup in Brazil*

The FIFA World Cup is one the most prominent sport tournaments on the planet due to the soccer's global appeal (Conchas, 2014), and Brazil hosted this event twice (1950 and 2014). Also, Brazil hosted the 2016 Summer Olympics meaning that in a 2-year interval, the country hosted two of the most prominent sport events in the World. Raspaud and Bastos (2013) suggest that hosting these events is justified by the presence of Brazil in international sport and recent economic development. Similarly, Santos (2014) suggests that hosting these mega-sport events is part of a wider strategy to improving international relations and demonstrating the country's vitality. An event such as FIFA World Cup is planned years in advance and involves major financing to execute well. The host must meet a detailed specification issued by FIFA in areas such as sport facilities, spaces to provide support to the event, housing conditions, transportation, media and broadcasting, and security, among other aspects (Raspaud & Bastos, 2013). In regards to the massive cost of hosting this event, the country received criticism for doing so at the expense of its own population. The increased poverty, crime in "favelas," inadequate

infrastructure, public education, and health assistance continues to be problematic issues, and some observers suggest that this type of event is conceived as a privileged event for elite and displays a lack of concern for the welfare of the citizens (Conchas, 2014). To this respect, a headline published in *Forbes* (2014) highlighted that “Bringing FIFA to Brazil equal to roughly 61% of education budget.”

A major sport event such as the FIFA World Cup tends to have an impact on the host country and its citizens. Although some researchers highlight potential benefits related with economic returns and increased tourism (e.g., Kaplanidou, 2009), others emphasize the undesirable public debts, social costs, and destination image problems (e.g., D. Liu & Wilson, 2014). In some occasions, once the event concludes, the facilities offer little utility and economic spark to the region (Boukas, Ziakas, & Boustras, 2011), leading citizens to question the added value of hosting the events. For example, many Greek citizens believe that the 2004 Summer Olympics contributed to the increase of public debt and economic downturn of the country (Vox Europ, 2012). In addition to looking for material legacies, it is now up to researchers to observe and analyze consumers’ experiences and produce new tools of interest for Brazil (Conchas, 2014) and other countries aiming to host mega-sport events. Efforts focused on identifying consumers’ perceptions of the quality and value of mega-sport events are still fairly limited and confined to the sphere of developed countries (Cornelissen, 2010). In this study, we focus on the consumers of the 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil to understand their perceptions of service quality and event’s value, controlling for their opinion about hosting this event in the country.

### *Service Quality in Sport Events*

The concept of service quality has received much attention in the literature due its role for creating competitive advantages in the marketplace (Ko et al., 2011). Zeithaml and Bitner (2003) refer to service quality as an attitude or global judgement about the superiority of a service. That is, service quality is defined by the consumer’s impression about the excellence of the service provided by the host (Y. D. Liu, Taylor, & Shibli, 2009), and these impressions may even include inferences derived from

environment cues (Baker, Parasuraman, Grewal, & Voss, 2002). As noted by Koo et al. (2009), consumer perception of service quality is a complex process, and thus, a variety of scales have been proposed in sport event settings (e.g., Biscaia, Correia, Yoshida, Rosado, & Marôco, 2013; Ko et al., 2011; Theodorakis & Alexandris, 2008). These studies have contributed to understanding service quality at sport events, and a wide range of attributes have been highlighted to capture consumers’ perceptions of the service provided by hosts. Notwithstanding, service quality perceptions tend to vary in different settings meaning that the specific features of each sport should be considered in consumer research (Biscaia et al., 2013).

In the realm of soccer, the SPORTSERV scale has been the basis for studies assessing service quality (e.g., Theodorakis & Alexandris, 2008), and includes five constructs (tangibles, responsiveness, access, reliability, and security) focused on the peripheral attributes of service delivery. More recently, Theodorakis, Alexandris, Tsigilis, and Karvounis (2013) refined this scale by including the constructs of game quality and team performance in order to capture the core service. In another example, Biscaia et al. (2013) built upon Yoshida and James’ (2011) model and proposed a scale for assessing service quality in the soccer industry capturing technical, functional, and aesthetic elements of the service. This scale is composed by 10 constructs (player performance, opponent characteristics, referees, front-line employees, facility access, seat space, security, facility design, game atmosphere, and crowd experience) and showed evidence of fair psychometric properties among soccer consumers.

Although there is no consensus on the appropriate measures to conceptualize service quality, researchers commonly accept that positive perceptions of service quality lead to increased value perceptions of the event among consumers (Han & Kwon, 2009). Hightower, Brady, and Baker (2002) conducted a study with baseball consumers and noted that service quality is positively related with perceived value of the event. Yoshida et al. (2013) further added to the literature by considering both cognitive and affective aspects on consumers’ value assessments. The authors conducted a study in varying sports and observed that service quality is pivotal in understanding consumers’ perceptions

of a multidimensional construct of value including hedonic value (i.e., festive aspects of the event reflecting potential entertainment and emotional worth), utilitarian value (i.e., the extent to which goods or services have useful and convenient functions), and symbolic value (i.e., status and prestige derived from the symbolic role of the service). Understanding consumers' value assessments of sport events represent an important step towards delivering the correct value-providing benefits (Ravald & Grönroos, 1996). However, previous studies have focused on sport events that are regularly available for consumers (sport leagues) and how service quality impacts consumer value creation (individual level), while little is known about the relationship between service quality and value in major sport events and how consumers perceive the value for the hosts (country level). The creation of value is a continuous process extending beyond individual transactions, and that is only possible when it contributes to the well-being of some actor in the context of his/her life (Vargo & Lusch, 2012). In line with this view, Akaka, Vargo, and Lusch (2012) suggest that value creation is determined through an experience created in conjunction with a service offering or value proposition, and that it should not simply contribute to individual levels of value, but also to the formation of the social context through which value is being derived. This implies that the host of a mega-sport event such as the FIFA World Cup is not simply offering a value proposition to consumers in a single moment in time, but also generating a social impact to the overall host community in general given that they may benefit from the event offering in other moments over time (e.g., improvement in infrastructures). Understanding the role of service quality on value perceptions of the event among consumers is paramount to better plan and deliver high-quality experiences and increased value in future major sport events. This is particularly important in an event such as the FIFA World Cup that is hosted only once every 4 years, but have a strong social and economic impact on hosting countries (Cornelissen, 2010; Santos, 2014). Drawing upon previous literature (Yoshida et al., 2013) and the remaining limitations (i.e., lack of research on service quality and value perceptions of major sport events) the following hypotheses are proposed:

- H1:** Consumers' favorable perceptions of service quality will have a positive effect on assessments of hedonic value.
- H2:** Consumers' favorable perceptions of service quality will have a positive effect on assessments of utilitarian value.
- H3:** Consumers' favorable perceptions of service quality will have a positive effect on assessments of symbolic value.

### *Perceived Value in Sport Events*

In the quest to build long-term relationships with target consumers, value creation has become a pivotal element for service providers (Clemes, Gan, & Ren, 2011). The aim is to find out what a consumer is trying to obtain in order to increase his/her perceived value of the service provider's offering (Ravald & Grönroos, 1996). Perceived value is generally defined in the literature as the ratio of perceived benefits to perceived sacrifices (Teas & Argawal, 2000). From a customer perspective, perceived sacrifices may include the costs required to obtain a service (e.g., price, time, and/or effort), while perceived benefits often include a combination of service quality attributes and customer characteristics or tastes (Ravald & Grönroos, 1996). As noted by Yoshida et al. (2013), there is no agreement on the conceptualization of value creation for consumers. Although some studies have operationalized the concept of value based on the tradeoff between consumers' perceptions of service quality and associated costs (Clemes et al. 2011), consumers' value assessments should take into account both cognitive and affective responses to service experiences (Sheth, Newman, & Gross, 1991). This suggests that consumers' value assessments should be based on the emotional, social, and utilitarian benefits of the sport event (Yoshida et al., 2013).

Recognizing the need to learn more about value creation, Yoshida et al. (2013) proposed a conceptualization of value based on consumers' overall assessments of the hedonic, utilitarian, and symbolic benefits relative to the costs of their actual consumption behavior. The authors further examined the relationship between service quality and value creation among sport consumers and provided support to prior studies that highlight a positive link between service quality and value in sport

settings (e.g., Cronin et al., 2000; Han & Kwon, 2009). Nevertheless, prior studies have focused on how service quality generates value for consumers of regular ongoing events such as sport leagues, and there is dearth of research on how consumers perceive the value of major sport events for the hosts and the role of service quality in the value creation process. As Vargo and Lusch (2012) suggest, value creation has a contextual nature that emphasizes the importance of understanding the social context. Chandler and Vargo (2011) further elaborate that there are layers of context, which suggests that the examination of a major sport event's value is not just about the consumer's perceptions of the direct value of the event for him/herself, but also at broader level of value to his/her country through its social impact. Additionally, consumers can assess value differently and service providers must be aware of social contexts influencing value creation (Akaka et al., 2012).

In the current study, we built upon Yoshida et al. (2013) and focused on consumers' perspective to examine the hedonic, utilitarian, and symbolic benefits of the 2014 FIFA World Cup for Brazil. Following the propositions provided by Yoshida et al. (2013), hedonic value refers to an experiential and affective benefit generated from the utility of the event based on its festive aspects. Utilitarian value is defined in this study as a functional and cognitive benefit based on the extent to which the event has useful and convenient functions to the country. In turn, symbolic value represents an expressive and respectful benefit derived from the symbolic role of the event for the country. Given the significant criticism of Brazil for hosting the 2014 FIFA World Cup (Forbes, 2014), complementarily to examining the role of service quality on consumers' perceptions of the event's value for the host country, we intend to understand the extent to which the perceptions of the event's value are influenced by consumers' opinion about Brazil hosting the event (i.e., agree with hosting the event in Brazil or against the decision of hosting the event). Based on the controversies related to the 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil, we propose that:

**H4:** Consumers' favorable opinions about hosting the 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil will have a positive effect on assessments of hedonic value.

**H5:** Consumers' favorable opinions about hosting the 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil will have a positive effect on assessments of utilitarian value.

**H6:** Consumers' favorable opinions about hosting the 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil will have a positive effect on assessments of symbolic value.

## Method

### *Instrument Development*

A total of 33 items were utilized to assess participants' perception of service quality and value of the event to Brazil. Although it is often difficult to assess service quality prior to the matches, all study items were designed to allow participants' evaluation of the event before attending an actual match (Table 1). The decision to collect data before the matches was based on the following reasons. First, contrary to the typical prohibition of alcohol consumption at Brazilian soccer matches, FIFA allowed the sale of alcoholic beverages inside the stadiums during the World Cup (Caetano, Pinsky, & Laranjeira, 2012), which could compromise participants' responses. Second, the match results tend to affect consumption experiences (Theodorakis et al., 2013) and it could lead consumers to overestimate the game outcome when evaluating the event's quality and value. Third, and based on the suggestions of five sport management researchers from universities located in the cities hosting the World Cup, it was not deemed appropriate to collect data at the end of the matches given that people tend to go home quickly due to security issues or to extend their celebrations at the fan zones (FIFA, 2012). In support of this decision, it is important to note that both prospective and nonconsumers of the FIFA World Cup often become familiar with the event's features long before the competition starts due to the large media coverage surrounding these events (ESPN, 2014). According to the inference theory, consumers make judgements about unknown service quality on the basis of information they receive from cues that are available to them (e.g., the external design of the stadium, the appearance and behavior of other attendees, promotional events around the stadium, and news in the media) (Baker et al., 2002). Furthermore, when



Table 1

Factor Loadings, Z-Values, Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

Variables	Factor Loading	Z-Value	CR	AVE
<b>Teams</b>			0.67	0.40
The players of the teams in the World Cup play well	0.640	36.76		
The teams participating in the World Cup have players with good technical skills	0.706	33.17		
I expect teams' performance in the World Cup to be excellent	0.544	27.72		
<b>Referees</b>			0.77	0.52
The referees appointed to the World Cup are credible	0.764	43.10		
The referees appointed to the World Cup correctly apply the rules of the game	0.667	36.85		
The referees appointed to the World Cup are honest in applying the rules of the game	0.734	41.16		
<b>Event employees</b>			0.83	0.61
The attitude of the employees in the World Cup shows that they understand my needs	0.790	48.80		
The employees at the World Cup respond quickly to my needs	0.815	50.94		
The employees at the World Cup are available to help the fans	0.742	44.81		
<b>Accessibilities</b>			0.76	0.51
The access to the Arena during the World Cup are good	0.739	42.53		
During the World Cup, the access to the Arena is safe	0.736	42.32		
The signs in the city during the World Cup give clear directions of where the arena is located	0.672	37.79		
There is a sense of security in the surroundings of the arena during the World Cup <sup>b1</sup>	–	–		
During the World Cup, I feel safe when traveling to the arena <sup>b1</sup>	–	–		
The city is safe during the World Cup <sup>b1</sup>	–	–		
<b>Event atmosphere</b>			0.81	0.59
The animation during the World Cup is nice	0.705	39.38		
There is a good ambiance in Brazil because of the World Cup	0.821	46.01		
The World Cup has generated a good ambiance in Brazil	0.765	43.12		
The arena is painted with attractive colors <sup>a</sup>	–	–		
The arena is attractive <sup>b1</sup>	–	–		
The beauty of the arena increases my enjoyment with the World Cup <sup>b1</sup>	–	–		
<b>Crowd experience</b>			0.80	0.57
Being with thousands of fans during the World Cup is a great experience	0.687	39.63		
I get excited when I am around fans who support their teams during the World Cup	0.792	47.57		
The energy of the fans during the World Cup is contagious	0.786	47.08		
<b>Hedonic value</b>			0.89	0.73
Considering the emotions generated by the World Cup, the money spent is fair	0.894	60.39		
The money spent in the World Cup is adequate to the excitement of this event	0.780	49.54		
In the World Cup, the money spent to have access to the environment at arena is well spent	0.880	58.99		
<b>Utilitarian value</b>			0.87	0.68
The World Cup has allowed to improve the infrastructures in Brazil	0.831	53.09		
Brazilian soccer will get better because of the World Cup	0.854	55.18		
The World Cup has allowed to improve the life quality of Brazilians	0.795	49.97		
The investment in the World Cup makes Brazil more prosperous <sup>b2</sup>	–	–		
As a Brazilian, I feel proud with hosting the World Cup <sup>b2</sup>	–	–		
I believe the World Cup helps improving Brazil's image in the World <sup>b2</sup>	–	–		
<b>Opinion about the 2014 FIFA World Cup</b>				
Do you agree with hosting the 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil <sup>c</sup>	1.00	–	–	–

<sup>a</sup>Item eliminated due the lack of individual reliability.<sup>b1</sup>Item eliminated after scale refinement: formerly in the construct of sense of security.<sup>b2</sup>Item eliminated after scale refinement: formerly in the construct of symbolic value.<sup>c</sup>The opinion about the event was measured by a single item that asked if the participants agree with hosting the event in Brazil.Model fit:  $\chi^2(217) = 1236.64$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ;  $\chi^2/df = 5.70$ , TLI = 0.96, CFI = 0.97, GFI = 0.97, RMSEA = 0.04 (CI = 0.037–0.041).

people perceive the environment as being meaningful, this perception conveys information directly to them (Gibson, 1979). In fact, the 2014 FIFA World Cup was the most talked about event in history by Brazilians on social network sites (e.g., Facebook and Twitter), while television programs related to the event achieved new viewing records among Brazilian networks (Exame, 2014).

The measures of service quality were adapted from Biscaia et al. (2013), and included 24 items to assess the dimensions of teams, referees, event employees, accessibilities, security, facility design, crowd experience, and event atmosphere. The appropriateness of this scale to assess service quality was due to the fact it was developed in the soccer context, and has previously showed adequate fit with a large sample of soccer consumers. Some changes in the original scale proposed by Biscaia and colleagues were made in order to generate a better fit with the FIFA World Cup. Specifically, the dimensions of player performance and opponent characteristics were merged into a single dimension (labeled Teams) given that data collection was planned for multiple games, and that FIFA requires a qualifying period designed to ensure the best national teams worldwide play the tournament (FIFA, 2014). The dimension of seat space was removed due to the fact that data collection was conducted before the games. The same rationale was followed for refining the dimensions of frontline employees, facility access, and game atmosphere, which were renamed into event employees, accessibilities, and event atmosphere, respectively. In turn, nine items to assess value were specifically designed for this study based on the definitions of hedonic value, utilitarian value, and symbolic value proposed by Yoshida et al. (2013). All items of the questionnaire were measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale anchored by “*Strongly Disagree*” (1) to “*Strongly Agree*” (7).

Next, a panel of six native Brazilian researchers conducted a content analysis of the items in terms of the relevance and clarity of wording for Brazilian population. One of the researchers was from a Portuguese university, while the others were from five different Brazilian universities. Each of them received an e-mail containing the purpose of this study, an explanation of data collection procedures, the description of each construct, and the list of items proposed. The reviewers provided

suggestions for maintaining all the items, but for changing the wording in 11 items deemed to be unclear to the Brazilian population. All suggestions were accepted, and the items were randomly placed on a questionnaire along with demographic questions for a pretest with native Brazilians in order to check the clarity of the instrument among potential participants. A total of 100 students were randomly selected from five Brazilian universities of the cities where data collection was planned (20 students from each institution). At this stage, three other items were reworded. Following this refinement, the final version of the questionnaire including 24 items to assess Service Quality and nine items to assess Value was deemed appropriate. Participants' opinion about the event was measured by asking if they agree with Brazil hosting the 2014 FIFA World Cup, and the responses were scored into 0 (*No, I do not agree*) or 1 (*Yes, I agree*).

#### *Participants and Data Collection*

The study sample consisted of consumers from the 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil who voluntarily accepted to participate and signed an informed consent form. Data were collected during 29 games in Brasilia (7 games), Curitiba (4 games), Minas Gerais (6 games), Recife (5 games), and Rio de Janeiro (7 games), and the procedures were consistent among all cities. The selection of these five cities was determined based on the institutional partnerships between the researchers' institutions and Brazilian universities located in these cities hosting the 2014 FIFA World Cup. A team of six surveyors and a supervisor were assigned to each of the cities. Each surveyor was assigned by the respective supervisor to a specific area surrounding the stadium. Surveyors approached potential respondents before the games, explained the project, and asked for their participation. Only individuals with ticket to attend the game inside the stadium were selected in order to avoid a misrepresentation of event consumers. Of those, only native Brazilians who live in Brazil were selected to participate due to the language on the survey. Of the 5,000 questionnaires distributed (1,000 in each city), a total of 3,466 were collected. After data screening, 3,042 complete responses were deemed usable for data analysis (Brasilia = 626; Curitiba = 523; Minas Gerais = 663;



Recife = 695; Rio de Janeiro = 535) for an effective response rate of 60.64%. About two thirds (67.6%) of the respondents were males. Ages ranged from 16 to 72 years old ( $M = 32.58$ ), with the majority (76.1%) being less than 40 years old. More than half (70.1%) had a college or postgraduate degree. In addition, the vast majority (87.7%) reported to have bought his/her own ticket.

### *Data Analysis*

A two-step maximum likelihood structural equation model (SEM) was performed using AMOS 22.0. First, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to assess the measurement model. Composite reliability was estimated to assess the internal consistency of the constructs (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2009). The average variance extracted (AVE) was estimated to evaluate convergent validity, while discriminant validity was established when AVE for each construct exceeded the squared correlations between that construct and any other (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Second, the SEM was estimated to test the research hypotheses. The appropriateness of both the measurement and structural models was assessed with the ratio of chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) to its degrees of freedom, Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), comparative-of-fit index (CFI), goodness-of-fit index (GFI), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). The significance of the structural weights was evaluated using the Z tests produced by AMOS and statistical significance was assumed at a 0.05 level.

## **Results**

### *Measurement Model*

The results of the CFA showed that the factor loading of one item from facility design failed to exceed the cut-off point of 0.50 (Hair et al., 2009), and consequently, the item was eliminated. Additionally, the AVE values for event atmosphere and facility design were lower than the squared correlations (0.59), indicating lack of discriminant validity. Based on this evidence, the items of event atmosphere and facility design were merged into a single construct labeled Event Atmosphere (Table 1). This finding is consistent with Yoshida and James'

(2011) suggestion that atmosphere and crowd experience could be appropriate measures to capture the aesthetic quality of sport events. Similar issues of discriminant validity were observed between accessibilities and security (0.62), and symbolic value and utilitarian value (0.68); thus, the same procedure of merging the constructs was adopted. The strong correlation between accessibilities and security is consistent with prior studies (e.g., Theodorakis & Alexandris, 2008), and may suggest that consumers perceive this major sport event holistically by associating the sense of security with accessibility issues, not just in the stadium surroundings but also in the city. Additionally, consumers' perceptions of the symbolic role of the event seem to be linked with the actual benefits related to infrastructure and quality of life (Table 1), which may suggest that value creation could be related with societal well-being (Akaka et al., 2012). Next, a scale refinement was conducted and only the three items loading the highest on these constructs were selected in order to ensure the reliability and parsimony of the model. These two new constructs were named accessibilities and utilitarian value based on the item content and previous literature (Yoshida et al., 2013). The final measurement model consisted of 24 items, with three items representing the dimensions of teams, referees, event employees, accessibilities, event atmosphere, crowd experience, hedonic value, and utilitarian value.

After these refinement procedures, all items showed high factor loadings ranging from 0.544 to 0.894, while the Z-values ranged from 27.72 to 60.39. As shown in Table 1, the internal consistency of the constructs was supported (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988), ranging from 0.67 to 0.89. Additionally, all AVE values were close to or greater than the 0.50 standard for convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), ranging from 0.40 (Teams) to 0.73 (Hedonic Value), having a mean AVE of 0.58. Although the AVE value for Teams was slightly below the suggested 0.50 criterion (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), this construct was maintained in the model for two main reasons. First, all factor loadings were indicative that the items load significantly on the Teams construct (see Table 1). Second, the construct of Teams is related to the core product in sports, and represents a key indicator to understand service delivery in sport events (Theodorakis et al., 2013).

Descriptive statistics of the measures and its correlations are reported in Table 2. The mean scores showed that crowd experience was the service quality attribute with the highest mean score ( $M = 6.10$ ,  $SD = 1.22$ ). Complementarily, participants showed a greater perception of hedonic value ( $M = 4.04$ ,  $SD = 1.70$ ) than utilitarian value ( $M = 3.57$ ,  $SD = 1.65$ ). All measures were significantly correlated and discriminant validity was accepted given the squared correlations between each construct and any other were lower than the AVE values for each construct. In addition, the results of the final measurement model showed an acceptable fit to the data [ $\chi^2(217) = 1236.93$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ;  $\chi^2/df = 5.70$ ,  $TLI = 0.96$ ,  $CFI = 0.97$ ,  $GFI = 0.97$ ,  $RMSEA = 0.04$ ]. The chi-square value was significant and its ratio to the degrees of freedom was above the 3.0 criterion (Kline, 1998). Still, this study was conducted with a large sample ( $n = 3,042$ ) and the chi-square statistic has been shown to be sensitive to sample size (Hair et al., 2009). The TLI, CFI, and GFI values were all greater than the threshold of 0.90 (Hair et al., 2009), providing evidence of good fit. Also, RMSEA was less than 0.06, suggesting good fit (Byrne, 2000). Overall, the measurement model showed an acceptable fit to the data, and consequently, the structural model was examined.

### Structural Model

The examination of the structural model included a test of the overall model fit and individual tests

of the hypothesized relationships. As a result of the model refinement, to examine the relationships between service quality attributes and value dimensions, H1 was further specified into H1a (Teams), H1b (Referees), H1c (Event employees), H1d (Accessibilities), H1e (Event atmosphere), and H1f (Crowd experience). Similarly, H2 was separated into H2a (Teams), H2b (Referees), H2c (Event employees), H2d (Accessibilities), H2e (Event atmosphere), and H2f (Crowd experience), while H3 was eliminated. Regarding the role of consumers' opinion about hosting the event in Brazil on their assessments of the event's value, H4 and H5 were relabeled H3 (Hedonic value) and H4 (Utilitarian value), respectively, while H6 was eliminated. These hypotheses are consistent with previous studies suggesting the need to examine the differential roles of service quality attributes on consumers' responses to sport events (Yoshida & James, 2011).

The overall assessment of the structural model was found to be acceptable [ $\chi^2(224) = 1867.72$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ;  $\chi^2/df = 8.34$ ,  $TLI = 0.94$ ,  $CFI = 0.95$ ,  $GFI = 0.95$ ,  $RMSEA = 0.05$ ]. Figure 1 reports the significant relationships in the model highlighting that not all hypotheses were supported. The dimensions of teams ( $\beta = 0.18$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and referees ( $\beta = 0.07$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) showed a significant positive effect on hedonic value supporting H1a and H1b. The path coefficient for event employees was not significant in predicting hedonic value ( $p > 0.05$ ); therefore, H1c was not supported. The hypotheses

Table 2  
Mean ( $M$ ), Standard Deviation ( $SD$ ), and Correlation Matrix

Construct	$M$	$SD$	Correlation Matrix								
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Teams	5.21	0.96	1.00								
2. Referees	4.67	1.16	0.52**	1.00							
3. Event employees	5.11	1.15	0.51**	0.51**	1.00						
4. Accessibilities	5.18	1.18	0.43**	0.46**	0.71**	1.00					
5. Event atmosphere	5.17	1.24	0.52**	0.39**	0.64**	0.56**	1.00				
6. Crowd experience	6.10	0.99	0.58**	0.26**	0.53**	0.56**	0.61**	1.00			
7. Hedonic value	4.04	1.70	0.36**	0.36**	0.42**	0.39**	0.41**	0.28**	1.00		
8. Utilitarian value	3.57	1.65	0.29**	0.33**	0.37**	0.34**	0.45**	0.14**	0.55**	1.00	
9. Agree with event <sup>a</sup>	—	—	0.22**	0.22**	0.24**	0.26**	0.28**	0.31**	0.38**	0.33**	1.00

Note. No correlations failed the AVE test of discriminant validity.

<sup>a</sup>2,455 participants (80.7%) supported the decision of Brazil hosting the event; 587 (19.3%) were against.

\*\* $p < 0.01$ .

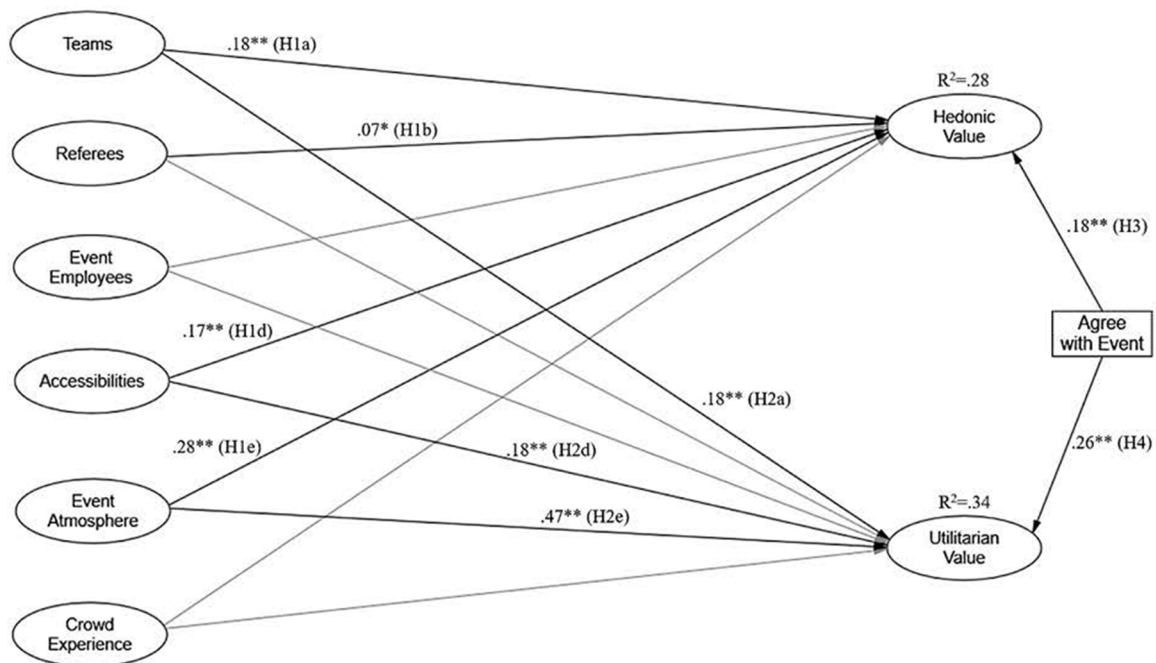


Figure 1. Structural model with the positive significant relationships. Model fit:  $\chi^2(224) = 1867.72$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ;  $\chi^2/df = 8.34$ , TLI = 0.94, CFI = 0.95, GFI = 0.95, RMSEA = 0.04 (CI = 0.047–0.051). \* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ .

H1d and H1e were supported as the effect of both accessibilities ( $\beta = 0.17$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and event atmosphere ( $\beta = 0.28$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) on hedonic value were positive and significant. In contrast, crowd experience showed a significant negative effect on hedonic value ( $\beta = -0.21$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ); consequently, H1f was not supported. The relationships between service quality dimensions and utilitarian value were positively significant for Teams ( $\beta = 0.18$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), accessibilities ( $\beta = 0.18$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), and event atmosphere ( $\beta = 0.47$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), supporting H2a, H2d, and H2e. Path coefficients for referees and event employees were not significant ( $p > 0.05$ ); consequently, H2b and H2c were not supported. Crowd experience showed a negative effect on utilitarian value ( $\beta = -0.43$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ); thus, H2f was not supported. Finally, participants' favorable opinion about Brazil hosting the event showed a significant positive relationship with both hedonic value ( $\beta = 0.18$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and utilitarian value ( $\beta = 0.16$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) supporting H3 and H4. Jointly, the service quality dimensions accounted for approximately 28% of the variance of hedonic value ( $R^2 = 0.28$ ) and 34%

of the variance of utilitarian value ( $R^2 = 0.34$ ), when controlling for the consumers opinion about Brazil hosting the event.

### Discussion and Implications

The goal of this study was to examine the relationships between service quality and value perceptions of the 2014 FIFA World Cup, and to explore the extent to which consumers' differential opinions about Brazil hosting the event affect perceptions of the event's value for the country. This study contributes to the literature by (1) examining how consumers' perceptions of service quality influence their perceptions of the event's value for the country, and (2) exploring the importance of consumers' opinion about hosting the event on their perceptions of value creation. The results indicate that not all service quality attributes were significant predictors of the value dimensions, and that a favorable opinion about hosting the 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil had a positive effect on consumers' perceptions of the events' value. These findings have both

theoretical and managerial implications in the context of hosting major sport events.

The factorial structure obtained for the measurement model supports the idea that consumers' perceptions of service quality tend to vary according to the cultural setting (Biscaia et al., 2013; Uetschy & Kramft, 2000), given that the initial dimensions of event atmosphere and facility design, as well as accessibilities and security indicated a lack of discriminant validity. These findings could be related with the fact that major sport events such as the FIFA World Cup have many points of interests spread in the host cities (e.g., team training sites, fan zones, or promotional events). That is, the event is often perceived holistically given that consumers start to involve with the event long before the game day, as opposed to regular sport events such as a single sport league match where most of the fun takes place on the game day and inside the arena. Thus, these findings may suggest that the specific features of major sport events (e.g., social opportunities outside the arena during the period in which the event takes place) imply a different conceptualization of service quality than what has been commonly used for regular events such as league matches (e.g., Biscaia et al., 2013; Theodorakis & Alexandris, 2008; Yoshida & James, 2011). Still, no matter the dimensionality, hosts should establish standards and monitor service quality attributes as many of these aspects can be controlled and manipulated to improve service delivery.

Regarding the value dimensions, the discriminant validity issues between utilitarian value and symbolic value may also indicate a lack of content validity of these dimensions in this specific context. Utilitarian value is related to the perceptions of the convenient functions of the event to the host, while symbolic value refers to perceptions about the prestige of the event to the host. Thus, based on item content (Table 1), participants' perceptions of the benefits associated with the improvement of soccer infrastructures and life quality seem to be strongly connected with the sense of prosperity and pride in the country. Establishing what value consumers are seeking from an event is paramount to deliver the correct benefits (Ravald & Grönroos, 1996). According to these findings, one may argue that improvements in community pride (Inoue &

Havard, 2014) or national identity (Heere et al., 2013) may also be derived from improved perceptions of the utilitarian value of a major sport event, and these links could guide future research.

The results of the structural model revealed that event atmosphere was the strongest predictor of both hedonic and utilitarian value. These findings are consistent with the idea that experiencing the atmosphere of sport events is one of the pivotal value-creating elements (Babin & Attaway, 2000). As noted by Hightower et al. (2002), the outcome of a service experience is evaluated not only in terms of utility, but also from an experiential perspective. Given that hedonic value is related to the affective and experiential benefit perceived by the consumer (Yoshida et al., 2013), host cities should strive to create an emotionally appealing atmosphere before and during the period in which the event takes place. For example, host cities should reinforce some of the current strategies such as adding permanent decorations to enhance the environment and attractiveness, and creating social opportunities so that all people can "live the event" outside the arena (Daily Mail, 2014). Additionally, new strategies such as installing megascreens in strategic places and displaying videos of the teams (e.g., highlights of the qualifying matches, reports about the teams and players), and offering memorabilia among the citizens may also be important measures to improve the vibrancy associated with the event atmosphere and lead to increased perceptions of hedonic value. In addition, the predictive role of event atmosphere on utilitarian value suggests that the country's investment in infrastructures for creating an appealing atmosphere for the event contributes to increase consumers' perceptions about the convenient benefits of the event to the country. Therefore, hosting a mega-sport event should represent an opportunity for developing infrastructure programs that allow for the increase of event atmosphere and to leave a lasting legacy in the country (Sant & Mason, 2015). For example, improved facilities should aim to support sports in general and help break down social barriers to participation and performance differences between segments of the population, while also promoting non-sport-related benefits such as enhanced community pride (Inoue & Havard, 2014) and increased quality of life (e.g.,

security, environment, transportations, health, and education care services).

The path coefficients for teams were also significant in increasing hedonic and utilitarian value dimensions. These findings are consistent with the idea that core aspects of a sport event drive consumers' value assessments (Westerbeek & Shilbury, 2002; Yoshida et al., 2013), which may suggest the importance of the qualifying matches required to play in this tournament. That is, the preliminary qualifying rounds should be designed to ensure not only a broad representation of teams from all continents ("Luis Figo: FIFA candidate," 2015), but also that the teams better positioned in FIFA World Ranking play the tournament in order to increase the perceived value of the event for consumers and host countries. Similar positive effects were found for the path coefficients between accessibilities and the dimensions of hedonic and utilitarian value. These findings highlight that functional aspects of the service can also contribute for increasing the event's value (Yoshida et al., 2013). These findings also suggest that service quality perceptions start being developed long before the consumer arrives at the arena to attend the game, and thus, a holistic perspective should be taken by hosts when planning these major sport events. Notwithstanding, it is important to note that the effect size of the path coefficients for both teams and accessibilities to hedonic and utilitarian value indicate a small to medium importance of these service quality dimensions to enhance consumers' value perceptions (Cohen, 1998). That is, if consumers do not have good perceptions of event atmosphere, teams and accessibilities will only play a modest role at increasing value judgements. In addition, referees showed a positive effect on hedonic value; yet, the low magnitude of this path coefficient indicates that a significant effect was observed perhaps due to the large sample size (Cohen, 1988). This path coefficient indicates that less than 1% (0.06%) of the variance in hedonic value is attributed to referees. Although the competence of referees is vital in sport settings (Groot, 2005), recommendations based on this relationship may lead to unnecessary planning efforts and/or be misleading to managers.

It is also important to note that crowd experience showed a negative effect on both hedonic and utilitarian value, even though the path coefficient

indicates a medium to low effect size for the path to hedonic value (Cohen, 1988). Crowd experience is related with the density, energy, and noise of the supporters (Yoshida et al., 2013), and it was the service quality attribute with the highest mean score among the participants (Table 2). Therefore, these findings suggest that even though consumers see the enthusiasm of the crowd as an important aspect of the event (i.e., singing, cheering, or adopting ritualized behaviors), they see no subsequent hedonic or utilitarian value of these actions. As noted by Hoggett and Stott (2010), crowds can exert a sort of hypnotic influence and a sense of anonymity that sometimes results in violent actions that would not occur in other settings. To this respect, Raspaud and Bastos (2013) highlighted that violence in Brazilian soccer has been a critical issue to the authorities. According to the authors, city life in Brazil is often transformed on game days due to the massive presence of the fans crossing the city to the arena and the associated risk of deviation from norms and potential violence. From a managerial perspective, hosts should be vigilant and work cooperatively with the police to reinforce security in the city and control supporters' activities during the period in which the event takes place in order to prevent negative effects of crowding on value creation. For example, the Elaborated Social Identity Model of Crowd Behavior (Drury & Reicher, 2000) has been successfully tested in previous major soccer events (Stott & Adang, 2009) and may represent a basis to aid hosts at preventing negative effects of crowd experience on value creation.

Finally, a consumer's favorable opinion about hosting the 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil showed to be important in the enhancement of perceptions of the event's value. This finding is of pivotal importance given that the disagreement levels with the 2014 FIFA World Cup increased over time, and were subject to great attention by media, leading the Brazilian government to engage in efforts to highlight the benefits of hosting the event ("Brazilian president hosts dinner," 2014). In light of these results, one can reinforce the idea that hosts should make rigorous use of public funds while simultaneously explaining the social and economic benefits derived from mega-sport events. Otherwise, major sport events can be a source of contention among the host community instead of producing



the expected positive outcomes in terms of social cohesion (Heere et al., 2013). Consistent with this view, ensuring a consumer's valuable experience with the event may also lead him/her to engage in positive actions (i.e., positive word of mouth) to promote the host city and/or future hosts of similar events (Simpson & Siguaw, 2008), and therefore could be examined in future longitudinal studies about mega-sport events.

#### *Limitations and Future Research*

This study, as with any, has limitations that should be acknowledged and taken into consideration for future research. First, data were collected in only five of the 12 cities that hosted the event, and therefore, findings may not be representative of all the consumers of the 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil. Additional studies with mega-events occurring in multiple places should gather participant data from all host cities in order to further clarify how perceptions of service quality contribute to value creation. In addition, data were collected prior to the participants entering the stadium due to aspects such as media coverage, participants' security, and FIFA's authorization to sell alcoholic beverages during the matches. As research has suggested, even though consumers can infer about the levels of service quality on the basis of several environment cues (Baker et al., 2002), the participants' responses towards some attributes may have actually been based on their anticipation of the service quality inside the stadium. In this regard, caution should be taken when making recommendations given that consumers cannot always provide an accurate assessment of service delivery without attending an actual match (i.e., core service) and experiencing the other ancillary attributes of the sport events. Thus, future research should try to collect data before, during, and after the matches in order to understand how consumers' perceptions of the event's quality and value vary across the temporal frame of the event. Second, while this study was focused on the period in which the event took place, additional studies should also be designed to capture the perceptions of service quality and value after the conclusion of the event. People's opinions about hosting mega-sport events may change over time depending on the achievement (or lack thereof) of the expected benefits.

Thus, longitudinal data collection would be important for a better understanding of the actual benefits of mega-events, particularly for countries engaged in multiple mega-event organizations or intending to bid for hosting future mega-sport events.

Third, by exclusively focusing on actual consumers with different opinions about the event, this study may not provide a global understanding of the perceived event's quality and value for the host. It was interesting that even some of those who opposed Brazil's hosting the event still attended the games. This may be related to the fact that attending a FIFA World Cup often represents a unique experience for most consumers, which may lead them to engage in this experience even when they are against Brazil hosting the event. However, regardless of those who supported or did not support the event, all participants in this study were Brazilian citizens, most had a college or postgraduate degree, and financial ability to purchase a FIFA World Cup ticket. Previous studies suggest that sociodemographic characteristics tend to influence perceptions of major sport events (Ritchie, Shipway, & Cleeve, 2009). As such, additional research should investigate perceptions of event's quality and value based on locals and/or visitors with different sociodemographic profiles (e.g., economic status), along with host community citizens who do not attend events as a way to draw conclusions beyond those with a direct experience with the event.

Fourth, even though the conceptualization of service quality and value was based on previous empirical studies conducted with sport consumers (Biscaia et al., 2013; Yoshida et al., 2013), some variables showed lack of discriminant validity. Therefore, additional studies should reexamine and refine the model obtained in the current study to better understand how to measure perceived service quality and value of mega-sport events. Also, the construct validity of the Teams construct suggests the need for scale refinement in future research. This may be related with the fact that participants have evaluated the event's quality before having attended a match. In line with previous suggestion for collecting data across the temporal frame of the event, the inclusion of additional items related to the competitiveness of the games, the actual performance of the teams, and associated excitement (Koo et al., 2009; Yoshida & James, 2011) may contribute to

enhance construct validity and better understanding of the role of teams on value creation for major sport events. Finally, although service quality was shown to have a significant relationship with value dimensions, a considerable amount of variance on hedonic and utilitarian value remains unexplained. The inclusion of other variables that are commonly evaluated at the consumer level such as perceived sacrifice (Brady et al., 2005) and emotions experienced during the event (Babin & Attaway, 2000; Biscaia, Correia, Rosado, Marôco, & Ross, 2012) may aid to extend our understanding about value creation in major sport events. Additionally, other control variables at the country level (e.g., opinions about social, economic, environmental, and/or tourism improvements) could be included to further understand the event's value judgements. Another interesting point of future research would be to examine the role of the event's value on consumers' intentions to enhance their involvement with sports through attending National league games or even becoming more physically active (Frawley & Cush, 2010; Weimar, Wicker, & Prinz, 2014).

In conclusion, the current study was driven by important research questions including how consumers' perceptions of service quality relates with the value attributed to the 2014 FIFA World Cup, and the extent to which consumer's differential opinion about hosting the event in Brazil had an influence on value perceptions. The findings indicate that the perception of service quality attributes is important to understand consumers' perceptions of the hedonic and utilitarian value of the event, and that a favorable opinion about Brazil hosting the event contributed to enhancing the consumers' perceptions of the event's value. Understanding the value of a major sport event among its consumers is the starting point to potentiate the right benefits in future undertakings, and this study represents an initial effort to provide future hosts with relevant information to enhance value creation.

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